

Message Text

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UNCLAS STATE 170674

FOR ROBERT ROSENSTOCK, US LEGAL DIVISION ONLY

FOL RPT SAN JOSE 3312 ACTION SECSTATE INFO GUATEMALA MANAGUA
PANAMA SAN SALVADOR TEGUCIGALPA JUL 8

QUOTE: UNCLAS SAN JOSE 3312

DEPT. PASS JUSTICE FOR U.S. ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, CS

SUBJECT: WILKINS/VESCO STORY

REF: (A) SAN JOSE 3277; (B) SAN JOSE 3247

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN EXCELSIOR'S LAST CHAPTER OF
VESCO/WILKINS SAGA, YET ANOTHER WILKINS DECLARATION
GIVEN IN THE U.S. IS CITED, IN WHICH WILKINS REPORTEDLY CLAIMS
THAT (1) SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK PRESSURED HIM INTO
SIGNING HIS MAY 21 DECLARATION (2) MENTION OF KIDNAPPING/
ASSASSINATION OF VESCO WAS OMITTED OVER HIS OBJECTIONS,
(3) STATEMENT MADE IN COSTA RICA WAS THE TRUE ONE, AND
(4) HE WAS WELL TREATED IN COSTA RICAN JAIL. ARTICLE
REHASHES EXTRADITION TIE-IN, CHARGES USG WITH POLITICAL
PERSECUTION OF VESCO, PUTS WORDS INTO MOUTHS OF EMBASSY
OFFICIALS, AND SUGGESTS IF AMBASSADOR IS HONORABLE MAN
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HE SHOULD PROTEST ACTIONS OF USG AGENCIES. END SUMMARY.

2. IN EXCELSIOR'S SEVENTH AND LAST CHAPTER OF
WILKINS/VESCO STORY, THE VESCO-SUPPORTED DAILY CARRIES

LENGTHY EXCERPTS FROM ALLEGED 865-PAGE SWORN STATEMENT BY WILKINS DATED JUNE 28 AND MADE AT SOME UNSPECIFIED PLACE IN THE U.S.--BUT NOT IN SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK. THRUST OF ARTICLE IS THAT WILKINS DISAVOWS MAY 21 STATEMENT MADE IN NEW YORK, AND REPEATS THEME THAT HIS MISSION WAS TO KIDNAP/ASSASSINATE VESCO IN COSTA RICA.

3. ARTICLE ALLEGES THAT WILKINS' MAY 21 STATEMENT CONTAINS FALSEHOODS AND OMISSIONS AND WAS PREPARED BY HIGH OFFICIALS AND SIGNED BY WILKINS UNDER PRESSURE AND THREATS. EXCELSIOR SAYS ITS "INVESTIGATION," SUPPORTED BY QUOTES TAKEN FROM WILKINS' JUNE 28 STATEMENT, HAS TURNED UP FOLLOWING:

A. AFTER EXPULSION FROM COSTA RICA AND ARRIVAL IN MIAMI, WILKINS WAS SPIRITED DIRECTLY TO NEW YORK, WITHOUT AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HIS FAMILY.

B. UPON ARRIVING IN NEW YORK HE WAS IMMEDIATELY TAKEN TO ELLIOT SAGOR'S OFFICE IN SOUTHERN DISTRICT, WHERE HE WAS OBLIGATED TO PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING WITH SAGOR AND OTHERS WITHOUT HAVING SLEPT FOR NEARLY 40 HOURS.

C. WHEN WILKINS TOLD SAGOR THAT HIS MISSION AGAINST VESCO HAD FAILED AND THAT HE HAD GIVEN A SWORN STATEMENT TO COSTA RICAN AUTHORITIES INCLUDING NAMES OF USG FUNCTIONARIES WHO CONTRACTED AND PAID HIM, SAGOR BECAME INFURIATED AND THREATENED WILKINS.

D. USG OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN THE WILKINS MISSION THEN REALIZED THAT THEIR PARTICIPATION COULD COME TO PUBLIC LIGHT AND PROSECUTOR SAGOR PROCEEDED TO PREPARE A STATEMENT FOR WILKINS TO SIGN. WILKINS' OBJECTIONS WITH RESPECT TO OMISSIONS AND INEXACT INFORMATION IN THE DOCUMENT ESPECIALLY THE ABSENCE OF REFERENCE TO KIDNAPPING OR ASSASSINATION WERE IGNORED.
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E. THE DOCUMENT THAT WILKINS WAS FORCED TO SIGN IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT AND WHICH THE U.S. EMBASSY SUBSEQUENTLY SENT TO EXCELSIOR WAS NOT CERTIFIED INDEPENDENTLY (FROM THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT). THE WORDS THAT APPEAR IN THIS DOCUMENT WERE SAGOR'S AND NOT WILKINS'. ONLY THE SIGNATURE OF WILKINS (NOT THE CONTENTS) WAS AUTHENTICATED BY A NOTARY WHO IS AN EMPLOYEE OF THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT.

4. TO SUPPORT PREVIOUS, EXCELSIOR REPRODUCES WILKINS' RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS PUT TO HIM BY UNIDENTIFIED INTERLOCUTOR IN HIS JUNE 28 DECLARATION:

QUESTION: DID YOU ASK FOR A COPY OF THE (MAY 2)) DOCUMENT YOU SIGNED?

WILKINS: YES.

QUESTION: WHAT WAS THE RESPONSE?

WILKINS: THAT I WAS UNABLE TO HAVE ONE.

QUESTION: DID YOU THINK THAT YOU HAD AN
ALTERNATIVE BETWEEN SIGNING AND NOT SIGNING?

WILKINS: NO.

QUESTION: DID MR. SAGOR TELL YOU THAT YOU WERE
NOT OBLIGED TO SIGN THE DECLARATION?

WILKINS: NO. HE SAID THAT I HAD TO SIGN IT.

QUESTION: DID YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF THREATENED
WHEN YOU SIGNED THE DECLARATION?

WILKINS: I SUPPOSE SO. HERE I WAS BEING
REQUESTED TO DO SOMETHING BY SOMEONE OF AUTHORITY
WHO HAD A HOSTILE ATTITUDE TOWARDS ME. I THOUGHT
THAT IT WAS BETTER TO GO AHEAD AND SIGN.

QUESTION: DID YOU FEEL THAT MR. SAGOR WOULD BE
ABLE TO DO SOMETHING TO YOU OR CAUSE SOMETHING TO
HAPPEN TO YOU IF YOU DIDN'T SIGN?

WILKINS: HE GAVE ME THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY
WOULD BE ABLE TO PUT ME IN JAIL OR SOMETHING
IF I DIDN'T DO IT.

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QUESTION: YOU CONSIDERED THAT YOU SIGNED THIS
UNDER PRESSURE?

WILKINS: THAT WAS WHAT I THOUGHT.

QUESTION: DID YOU THINK THAT IF YOU SIGNED THE
DECLARATION THAT YOU WOULD BE PROVIDED
TRANSPORTATION TO GO HOME?

WILKINS: YES. UNTIL THAT MOMENT I
HADN'T THOUGHT SO. I ASKED ABOUT IT AND THEY
ALWAYS POSTPONED IT UNTIL IMMEDIATELY AFTER I
SIGNED THE DECLARATION.

QUESTION: HAVE YOU AT ANY TIME FELT FEAR THAT
ANY ACTION COULD BE TAKEN AGAINST YOU BY THE U.S.
WITH RELATION TO THIS AFFAIR?

WILKINS: YES.

QUESTION: WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS?

WILKINS: I AM WORRIED BECAUSE OF MY PAROLE
AND ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT SAGOR OR ANOTHER
MEMBER OF THE GROUP MIGHT ARRANGE FOR ME TO BE PUT
IN JAIL TO TRY TO AVOID MY GIVING TESTIMONY. NOT
NECESSARILY TESTIMONY BUT THAT I TELL OTHERS ABOUT

THEIR EFFORTS TO SEND ME TO COSTA RICA AND THE PROCEDURES THAT THEY USED. RECENTLY I HAVE ARRIVED AT THE CONCLUSION THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO COVER UP THE FACT THAT THEY WERE EVEN INVOLVED WITH ME, TRYING TO COVER UP IN ANY WAY THEY CAN..

QUESTION: ON SOME OCCASION HAVE YOU BEEN THREATENED BY ANY PERSON THAT YOU THOUGHT TO BE AN OFFICIAL, EMPLOYEE, OR AGENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE U.S.?

WILKINS: YES.

QUESTION: WHEN AND BY WHOM?

WILKINS: ELLIOT G. SAGOR.

QUESTION: WHEN?

WILKINS: DURING MY LAST TRIP TO NEW YORK WHICH WAS TO REPORT TO THEM. (WHEN THEY PREPARED THE NEW YORK DECLARATION).

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QUESTION: WHAT WAS OMITTED IN THE DOCUMENT THAT YOU WANTED TO BE INCLUDED?

WILKINS: HE PUT IN OUR DOCUMENT A DETAIL ABOUT THE AGREEMENT THAT WAS MADE FOR ME TO GO TO COSTA RICA BUT HE OMITTED THE FACT THAT I, HE, AND ROSS IN DISCUSSION ABOUT THE MATTER OF ASSASSINATION, YOU KNOW (SIC).

QUESTION: WAS THERE REFERENCE IN THE DOCUMENT ABOUT CONVERSATION BETWEEN YOU, MR. SAGOR, AND MR. ROSS AND ANY OF THE OTHERS ABOUT POSSIBLE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPTS?

WILKINS: I DON'T THINK SO. THIS WAS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT I WAS BOTHERED ABOUT.

QUESTION: WAS THERE A REFERENCE IN THE DOCUMENT ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PUTTING MR. VESCO IN THE TRUNK OF A VEHICLE OR OTHER WORDS TO THIS EFFECT?

WILKINS: IT'S POSSIBLE.

QUESTION: DID YOU REMARK TO MR. SAGOR ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF ANY MENTION OF DISCUSSIONS ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF ASSASSINATION?

WILKINS: YES. I MENTIONED I WAS WORRIED ABOUT IT BECAUSE HE STILL REFUSED TO PUT IN WHAT HE AND ROSS TALKED ABOUT CONCERNING ASSASSINATION.

QUESTION: DID YOU SAY ANYTHING TO MR. SAGOR THAT THE DOCUMENT SEEMED TO CONCLUDE THE WHOLE PLAN WAS YOURS?

WILKINS: I MENTIONED IT TO HIM. I SAID, "YOU HAVE THIS SEEMING AS IF IT WERE ALL MY IDEA.

YOU KNOW THAT IT ISN'T. YOU KNOW THAT IT ISN'T."
I TOLD HIM, "YOU DIDN'T PUT DOWN EVERYTHING THAT I SAID."

QUESTION: WAS THERE MENTION IN THE DOCUMENT
ABOUT ANY PROMISE THAT THEY MADE TO YOU?

WILKINS: NONE.

QUESTION: DID YOU CALL SAGOR'S ATTENTION TO THIS
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OMISSION?

WILKINS: YES.

5. IN A SERIES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING
THE STATEMENT THAT WILKINS GAVE IN COSTA RICA, WILKINS
IS QUOTED THAT "THOSE LEGAL DOCUMENTS IN THE MINISTRY
OF SECURITY IN COSTA RICA HAVE MY COMPLETE TRUE
DECLARATION OF EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED FROM THE MOMENT
THAT I ARRIVED IN COSTA RICA UNTIL THE MOMENT THAT I DEPARTED."

6. SPECIFICALLY REGARDING KIDNAPPING OR ASSASSINATION
OF VESCO, EXCELSIOR REPRODUCES THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE FROM
THE MYSTERIOUS JUNE 28 DECLARATION:

QUESTION: YOU TOLD US YESTERDAY ABOUT A
CONVERSATION IN NEW YORK EARLIER THIS YEAR
BETWEEN YOU, ROSS, AND SAGOR IN WHICH ROSS ASKED
YOU IF YOU KNEW ANYBODY WITH THE CAPACITY AND
DISPOSITION TO ASSASSINATE ROBERT VESCO, REMEMBER THAT

WILKINS: I BELIEVE MY EXACT WORDS WERE
"TO CARRY OUT AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT?"

QUESTION: BUT THE POSSIBILITY OF KIDNAPPING/
ASSASSINATING MR. VESCO OR PUTTING HIM IN THE TRUNK
OF A VEHICLESAS DISCUSSED WITH YOU IN NEW YORK?

WILKINS: YES.

QUESTION: TRY TO REMEMBER AS EXACTLY AS YOU CAN THE
WORDS THAT MR. ROSS SPOKE DURING THE MEETING THAT YOU
ARE TALKING ABOUT.

WILKINS: I THINK I HAVE ALREADY. MR. ROSS
ASKED ME IF I KNEW ANYONE WITH THE CAPACITY INCLUDING
THE WILL TO CARRY OUT AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST VESCO.

QUESTION: PUTTING VESCO IN THE TRUNK OF A VEHICLE
WAS SOMETHING THAT YOU UNDERSTOOD WAS AT YOUR DISCRETION
IN THE CONTEXT OF YOUR MISSION?

WILKINS: I UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS SOMETHING THAT
WAS POSSIBLE THAT IT COULD HAPPEN...IT WAS DISCUSSED...
PUTTING VESCO IN THE TRUNK OF A VEHICLE OR THAT I COULD END UP
WITH HIM IN THE TRUNK OF MY CAR. IT WAS DISCUSSED WITH
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EVERYBODY THERE. I DON'T KNOW WHO BROUGHT UP THE SUBJECT.

QUESTION: AND IT WAS YOUR UNDERSTANDING BEFORE YOU WENT TO COSTA RICA THAT IF THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED ITSELF TO PUT MR. VESCO IN A POSITION TO BE CAPTURED THAT THIS WAS SOMETHING THAT YOU SHOULD TRY TO ACCOMPLISH.

WILKINS: THAT WAS MY IMPRESSION.

QUESTION: DID YOU CONSIDER YOUR MISSION WAS TO INCLUDE KIDNAPPING OR TAKING BY FORCE ANY OF THE ASSOCIATES OF VESCO SUCH AS DR. MEISSNER OR MR. GRAZE?

WILKINS: I UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY WOULD BE HAPPY IF IT WERE POSSIBLE FOR ME TO DO IT, YOU KNOW, BY ANY MEANS, TO PUT ANY OF THESE GENTLEMEN IN THEIR HANDS.

QUESTION: DID YOU AT ANY TIME TELL ANY MEMBER OF THE GROUP (U.S. SOUTHERN DISTRICT OFFICIALS) THAT THERE WAS ANYTHING THAT YOU DIDN'T WANT TO DO IN THIS MISSION?

WILKINS: NO. I THINK THAT I TOLD THEM AT SOME TIME THAT I WOULD BE READY, YOU KNOW, TO ACCEPT ANY MISSION THAT THEY PROPOSED TO ME, SOMETHING LIKE THAT.

7. ARTICLE GOES ON TO DREDGE UP PAST PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY USG OFFICIALS AND GOCR OFFICIALS CONCERNING VESCO EXTRADITION, INCLUDING JUDGES OPINION AT TIME 1973 VESCO EXTRADITION ATTEMPT FAILED. ARTICLE NOTES THAT: "UNFORTUNATELY DIPLOMATIC PROTOCOL INHIBITS GOCR EXECUTIVE BRANCH FROM MAKING PUBLIC ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES ON OCCASIONS THAT INVOLVE INAPPROPRIATE FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN THE VESCO CASE...

8. AMONG CONCLUSIONS THAT ARTICLE DRAWS ARE FOLLOWING LIES, CHARGES, AND INSULTS REGARDING ACTIVITIES OF USG OFFICIALS, USG, AND EMBASSY IN VESCO/WILKINS AFFAIR:

--THAT SAGOR FORCED WILKINS TO SIGN A DOCUMENT THAT HAS INEXACT CONTENTS, IMPORTANT OMISSIONS, AND THAT "REPRESENTS ANOTHER EFFORT TO CONFUSE AND TO COVERUP THE FACTS."

--THAT EX-CONVICT WILKINS WAS CONTRACTED AND PAID BY THE USG TO COME TO COSTA RICA TO COMMIT GRAVE ILLEGAL ACTS AGAINST VESCO.

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--THAT "U.S. OFFICIALS ATTEMPTED TO COVER UP THE FACTS, OMITTING FALSE DECLARATIONS, AND WITHHOLDING INFORMATION."

--THAT WILKINS WAS NOT ILL TREATED BY COSTA RICAN AUTHORITIES (NOTE: BOTH NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE AND WILKINS' NEW YORK STATEMENT CLAIM ILL TREATMENT)

AND THAT HIS DECLARATION GIVEN VOLUNTARILY TO COSTA RICAN AUTHORITIES WAS EXACT AND TRUE.

--THAT "VESCO IS THE VICTIM OF A POLITICAL PERSECUTION ON THE PART OF THE USG."

--THAT THE "USG DOES NOT HAVE PROOF TO SUPPORT THE CHARGES AND ACCUSATIONS OF THE GRAND JURY, WHICH WERE FABRICATED, AGAINST VESCO."

--"THAT THE USG HAS ACTED IN BAD FAITH AND VIOLATED VESCO'S HUMAN RIGHTS."

--THAT "USG HAS PRESENTED FALSE EVIDENCE AGAINST VESCO IN FOREIGN COURTS IN ATTEMPTS TO GAIN HIS EXTRADITION."

--THAT USG "HAS PRESSURED GOCR AUTHORITIES TO ELIMINATE REQUIREMENTS OF PROOF IN THE COSTA RICAN EXTRADITION LAW TO FACILITATE THEIR CASE AGAINST VESCO."

--THAT "USG HAS ORGANIZED OTHER PERSONS BEFORE WILKINS TO ACT AGAINST VESCO, BUT THOSE ATTEMPTS ALSO HAVE FAILED."

--THAT "USG HAS VIOLATED FOREIGN LAWS AND SOVEREIGNTY BY INDUCING THE THEFT OF PRIVATE PROPERTY, AIRPLANES, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ALLEGE THAT SUCH PROPERTIES PERTAIN TO MR. VESCO."

9. IN A LENGTHY LAST SECTION ABOUT THE U.S. EMBASSY ROLE IN THE VESCO/WILKINS AFFAIR, ARTICLE AFFIRMS THAT WILKINS' DECLARATION OF JUNE 28 DEMONSTRATES THAT EMBASSY OFFICIALS HAD KNOWLEDGE OF WILKINS TRUE MISSION IN COSTA RICA AT TIME WHEN EMBASSY STATED "WE CATEGORICALLY DENY ANY PARTICIPATION IN ANY ATTEMPTS AT KIDNAPPING OR ASSASSINATION." ARTICLE CONTINUES THAT BY ACCEPTING POSITION OF SOUTHERN DISTRICT COURT IN MAY 21 WILKINS DECLARATION, EMBASSY IS SAYING IN EFFECT THAT WILKINS WAS FORCED TO GIVE HIS DECLARATION IN COSTA RICA WHEN IT HAD FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE THAT THIS WAS NOT SO. ARTICLE STATES THAT IN ANY CASE EMBASSY IS TO BE CRITICIZED FOR TRYING TO COVER UP THE FACTS OR FOR PERMITTING ITSELF TO BE USED AS A TOOL OF THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK OFFICIALS AS WELL AS OF OTHER USG UNCLASSIFIED

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AGENCIES IN THE COVER-UP OF THE FACTS IN THE POLITICAL PERSECUTION AND COMMISSION OF ILLEGAL ACTS AGAINST VESCO. ARTICLE SAYS THAT U.S. EMBASSY DID NOT TAKE ANY CORRECTIVE ACTION WHEN IT ORIGINALLY LEARNED OF THE MATTER AND THAT EVEN FOLLOWING THE PUBLICATIONS IN U.S. AND COSTA RICAN PRESS EMBASSY OFFERS EXCUSES OR EMITS DECLARATIONS THAT ONLY COVER UP THE TRUE FACTS... THE FOLLOWING SALIENT EXTRACTS FROM WILKINS' JUNE 28 SWORN STATEMENT ARE CITED:

QUESTION: DID MR.() (UNNAMED HIGH FUNCTIONARY OF THE U.S. EMBASSY) LEAD YOU TO BELIEVE THAT THINGS WOULD GET WORSE IF YOU OBTAINED A LAWYER THAN IF YOU REMAINED IN PRISON WITHOUT ONE?

WILKINS: YES. HAD I THOUGHT I COULD HAVE GOTTEN OUT MORE RAPIDLY I WOULD HAVE GOTTEN A LAWYER AS SOON

AS I COULD HAVE... I WAS TOLD (BY EMBASSY FUNCTIONARY):-
THAT THE AMBASSADOR VISITED THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
OR HIS HOUSE EVERY DAY TO MAKE PROPOSALS TO HIM AND
THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD MADE MY SITUATION KNOWN TO
THE PRESIDENT, AND THAT THEY (EMBASSY) WERE WAITING
FOR A COPY OF MY DECLARATION... HE TOLD ME THAT THE
COSTA RICAN PRESIDENT HAD INFORMED THE AMBASSADOR THAT HE
WAS AUTHORIZING MY RELEASE UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS... HE DID
NOT ELABORATE ON WHAT THOSE CONDITIONS WERE. THEY PROMISED
ME THAT SOMEONE WOULD RECEIVE ME IN MIAMI UPON MY ARRIVAL--
PROBABLY MY PAROLE OFFICER.

10. ARTICLE STATES THAT AMBASSADOR TODMAN HAS NOT
MADE ANY PERSONAL DECLARATION ABOUT THIS CASE, AND
FUTURE ACTIONS WILL DETERMINE HIS GOOD FAITH AND
SINCERITY, IN ADDITION TO THAT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE.
ARTICLE STATES THAT BY NOT TAKING ANY POSITIVE ACTION
AND BY REMAINING SILENT, AMBASSADOR TODMAN, THE DEPARTMENT,
AND USG AGENCIES WILL ONLY SHOW THEY APPROVE OF ILLEGAL AND
DIRTY METHODS THAT ARE BEING APPLIED BY THE USG AGAINST
ROBERT VESCO. ARTICLE RECALLS AT THIS POINT ACTIVITIES OF
SPECIAL SENATE INVESTIGATING COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE.
RETURNING TO AMBASSADOR, ARTICLE NOTES THAT IF HE REALLY
DOES NOT EXCUSE THIS TYPE OF INAPPROPRIATE ACTION AND HE DOES
NOT HAVE THE MEANS OR AUTHORITY TO DETEST IT, THEN HE SHOULD
NOT BECOME A GUILTY CO-CONSPIRATOR BY AVOIDING THE SUBJECT.
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ON THE CONTRARY, AMBASSADOR TODMAN SHOULD PROTEST THESE
ACTIONS PUBLICLY. ACCORDINGLY, HE WILL BE JUDGED AS AN
"HONEST MAN AND AN HONORABLE MAN."

11. ARTICLE TERMINATES WITH STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION
OF ITS ORIGINAL TITLE "COSTA RICAN MISSION TO KIDNAP OR
ASSASSINATE VESCO," AND STATES THAT TITLE COULD
WELL HAVE BEEN "ONE MORE DAY IN THE PERSECUTED LIFE OF
ROBERT L. VESCO."

12. COMMENT: EMBASSY PREPARING SHORT RESPONSE TO
EXCELSIOR. TEXT BEING TRANSMITTED SEPTTEL.
TODMAN

UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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